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October 10, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT'S FILE

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Meeting with MOBUTU Sese Seko,  
President of the Republic of Zaire  
Wednesday, October 10, 1973,  
10:30 a.m. ,  
in the Oval Office

PARTICIPANTS: The President.  
President Mobutu.  
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.  
Mr. A. Jose De Seabra, State Department  
Interpreter/Notetaker

During initial pleasantries, both Presidents stressed the feelings of warm personal friendship which underlie the relations between our two countries.

President Mobutu: As an example of that friendship, I want to mention the fact that at the recent summit meeting of non-aligned countries in Algiers, where all countries spoke against the United States, Zaire's voice was the only one to say that the United States was not the only imperialist country, and why did not anyone speak out against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

President Nixon: Regarding the flare-up in the Middle East, we want you to be sure that we are doing all we can in our role as a peacemaker, keeping communications open with all parties. There is no easy solution as neither party wants to settle the matter at the present time. Wars usually do not end until one side is ahead or behind, and the situation seems to be stalemated at this time. I understand your position of wanting to side with your African colleagues, and I am quite sure that you understand our position, which is not pro-Israel, or anti-Arab, or anti-Egypt, but rather pro-peace. We hold that every country is entitled to its independence and to be free from outside aggression.

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President Mobutu: I made my position clear in my speech at the United Nations. For the first time, my Israeli friends realized that whereas other African countries never failed to attack imperialism, colonialism and zionism when they were breaking relations with Israel, Zaire on the other hand, while acting out of African solidarity, was separating itself from its Israeli friends until the latter returned the occupied territories to a fellow African country, a member of the Organization of African Unity. Still, Foreign Minister Eban became enraged, calling me a traitor. He might come to regret having said what he said, as I might start something against him in Africa. At the same time, I do realize that he was carried away by his emotions. You know well, Mr. President, that Zaire aspires to the role of the leading nation in Africa, just like Egypt, Libya or Algeria. And when Israel downed a Libyan plane with a hundred passengers, Zaire was placed in a difficult position, and, as a leader, it had to voice its protest. Then just recently, Minister Eban welcomed to Israel the Minister of the Interior and Information of South Africa. More embarrassment for us. Also, at the United Nations while the African nations and some others -- for a total of 80 -- voted in favor of excluding South Africa from the United Nations, Israel came out in support of South Africa. Thus, Israel is placing its friends in very embarrassing situations, and since we do not hide the fact that we want to be leaders, we are all the more embarrassed.

President Nixon: I understand your position. We approach these matters in an even-handed way and look forward to good relations between the United States and all the nations in the Middle East, not just with one or two.

President Mobutu: I wish to give you the fullest assurance that you can always depend on Zaire's willingness and readiness to provide constructive and discreet assistance in solving any political or diplomatic problem involving any African nation or any other non-aligned nation -- as in the recent case involving Cambodia. This because of both our position of leadership in Africa and our clear and firm stand with regard to the Arab world and the other countries of the Third World.

President Nixon: I realize that you must maintain a position of credibility vis-a-vis your colleagues in the Organization of African Unity. I also appreciate your refusing to go along with those of your colleagues who have made pronouncements against the United States. And the fact that there is a solid friendship between ourselves, as well as an official friendship between our two countries, is something that is very good for our countries as well as for Africa.

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President Mobutu: Coming now to bilateral issues between Zaire and the United States, there is an economic issue that causes my country a great deal of distress and difficulty and that in the final analysis places me and my government in an awkward position. I am referring to the effect on our economy as a whole, and on our budget of the sales on world markets of commodities in the United States strategic stockpile, such as copper, diamonds, tin and cobalt. It turns out that every time prices start to go up, the United States makes sales from its strategic stockpile, and such actions are disastrous for us as we cannot put together an adequate budget. Time and again I have sent special representatives to the United States to discuss the diamond and copper situation. Your people tell our people that they understand our problems, but nothing seems to happen. The sales on world markets of commodities in the United States strategic stockpile do create very serious difficulties for my country.

President Nixon: We will keep in close touch with your government. Our budget situation is a difficult one, and that is the reason for those sales from our stockpile. Still, we do not want our domestic policies to harm our friends. So we shall have appropriate consultations.

President Mobutu: My own sources informed me three years ago that the United States had decided to sell copper from the stockpile in retaliation for the nationalization by President Allende of United States-controlled mining interests in Chile. But when the United States resorts to such measures, they are detrimental not only to Chile, but also to a friendly country like Zaire which then finds itself in serious difficulties. This year the United States said it would not sell copper to the business community, but, rather, would dispose of it for the purpose of minting coins. It now turns out that this copper appears on world markets, creating a very difficult situation for us.

President Nixon: Our decision to sell copper from the stockpile was not made as a move against President Allende. It resulted from an evaluation of our needs and was directly tied to our budgetary problems. We remain fully aware of the interest shown by your country and other friendly nations in our stockpile. Therefore, we shall consult with you, since we do not wish to hurt anyone.

President Mobutu: Again I want to place the strongest emphasis on the fact that your actions regarding stockpile sales not only are harmful to my country, but they place me in awkward situations. I find it most difficult to try to explain to my assistants, to my people, and to other nations,

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that the budgetary problems besetting us are the results of actions on the part of a country that we consider as our friend, and that has always helped and understood us. Isn't there some practical way to settle these issues when they arise? Please try to help us out.

President Nixon: You should contact Mr. Kissinger, who, in addition to being Secretary of State, retains his position as the Presidential Adviser on Foreign Affairs. Normally, Mr. Kissinger is not contacted directly, but that can be done for major issues involving certain countries.

President Mobutu: At the time of my visit in 1970, you promised me that direct contact, but it has been difficult to carry out. Mr. Kissinger was always so busy with Viet-Nam and China, that he became very hard to get. Such contacts might be substantially helped by my new Ambassador. He is coming here from our Embassy in Bonn; he has been a Cabinet Minister; and he is the leading economist in my country. He also has my full confidence. So, if Mr. Kissinger accepts him, he can provide the channel for direct contact. I wish to point out that United States Ambassador Vance is the only Ambassador that has direct access to me by telephone, both at the Presidential Palace, and at my residence. As a matter of fact, he drops by for morning coffee just about every day.

Secretary of State Kissinger: My basic orders in the State Department are that the Ambassadors see the Deputy Secretary, and not me. However, if your Ambassador has a personal message from you, Mr. President, for President Nixon, on an urgent matter, then he sees me. If it is a routine matter, he would normally contact the Deputy Secretary of State, or the appropriate Assistant Secretary of State.

President Mobutu: As I have mentioned, your Ambassador in Zaire has direct access to me at all times.

Secretary of State Kissinger: I will give your Ambassador the name of my personal assistant, so that I may be contacted directly, instead of going through the routine channels.

President Nixon: I would appreciate your not telling anyone about this arrangement, which is, of course, limited to a small number of countries, yours being the only one in Africa. As you well know, we would welcome a similar procedure to be applied to all the African leaders, if only there was enough time available. But then, we would have less time for proper consideration of Zaire's own problems.

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President Mobutu: Another vital issue in our bilateral relations is that of wheat. For the past 10 years, we have been receiving PL-480 assistance. But recently, a difficult situation has developed on account of United States wheat sales to the U.S.S.R. and the People's Republic of China (C.P.R.). Then there is the matter of Intercontinental Grains Company, which built a mill three years ago. With its big production, this facility has been of significant help both to Zaire and to neighboring countries. At the present time, prices have reached \$8.80, up from a previous level of \$5.60. So this is an alarming turn of events.

President Nixon: The wheat and feed grains price/production crisis is not the result of United States sales to the U.S.S.R. and the C.P.R. There is an increased and increasing demand for grains on a world-wide scale, as well as shortages in certain areas. We, for our part, are trying to meet this problem by increasing our production. After next year's crop is in, we will be able to be constructive.

President Mobutu: Ours is a very serious problem for which only President Nixon can find a solution. While we were receiving PL-480 assistance, there was this United States counterpart fund that went into economic development activities. But after President Nixon encouraged American businessmen to invest in Zaire, a number of American companies came in, particularly International Grains, and PL-480 has been over ever since.

Secretary of State Kissinger: There is no causal relationship in this instance.

President Mobutu: Regarding this increase in prices by International Grains, I consider this to be a problem that deserves special attention and requires specific action on the part of President Nixon, the Secretary of State, and the United States Government's economists.

President Nixon: While prices will not come down in the very near future, we foresee a drop in the months ahead. Such price movements are not limited to the United States.

Secretary of State Kissinger: After we get the crop reports for next year, we may be able to make some adjustments in PL-480 programs.

President Mobutu: The fact remains that the response of the American business community to President Nixon's promotion of Zaire's economy has had an adverse effect on certain sectors of that economy, namely the discontinuation of PL-480 as tied to the activities of Intercontinental Grains.

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President Nixon: We shall take a good look at the agricultural situation as it affects Zaire's economy.

Secretary of State Kissinger: Mr. President, your speech at the United Nations was a masterpiece. It sounded critical of the United States, but when one read it, it was not so bad.

President Nixon: It got the greatest applause ever. That shows what a skillful politician President Mobutu is.

President Mobutu: The African nations were very gratified over the significant references to Africa in the Secretary's speech. In the same vein, Mr. President, just as 1973 was the year of Europe, it would be a wonderful thing if one of the remaining years of your term in office were the Year of Africa. And, getting back to our bilateral relations, I do hope that Ambassador Vance can remain at his present post for a long time yet.

President Nixon: Is there a change in the offing, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary of State Kissinger: No, sir.

President Nixon: Is he our Ambassador, or your Ambassador?

President Mobutu: A truly effective Ambassador is both.

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